

Revelation 3

1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

The Lord presents Himself as the One who is the authority and the upholder of the churches. It should be noted that the bad points appear before the good points in these churches. This is a reversal of the pattern within the previous chapter.

Sardis, once the capital of Lydia, was also a wealthy industrial city and its chief business was in wool, dying it and producing cloth from it. It was as pagan, if not more so, as the other cities mentioned.

The “seven spirits of God” is probably simply a reference to the Holy Spirit’s fullness, since the number seven is the number of perfection. As stated elsewhere, the “seven stars” are likely to be the seven angels over the churches, or else, as some suggest, the seven pastors of them.

Bad Points:-

a) They had a reputation in the church world of that day. They appeared to work hard for the Lord, but in reality they did it all for their own glory. They seemed like a vibrant and alive church, but in fact they were spiritually dead. They were outwardly alive, but at heart, they were dead (Matthew 23:27-28).

Matthew 23:27-28 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

The fact is, they were members of a vibrant church, but few were actually born again believers; not unlike most denominations today.

2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

b) They had failed to be watchful. This should also be seen as including watchfulness in prayer. They could recover themselves if they repented and got themselves right with God. This was their wake up call (Romans 13:11).

Romans 13:11 **And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.**

c) They had need of spiritual strength to uphold the doctrines of Christ. This speaks of the fact that they had compromised the faith by involving themselves in deception. This also could be remedied before it was too late.

d) They had arrived at this spiritual condition because they had become half-hearted regarding the Lord's work. Religious duty and spiritual pride had caused this imperfection among them. It also means that they had never completed what they had started.

3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

The Remedy:-

a) Remember. These believers needed to think back upon what they had received and heard regarding the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. They had been blessed by the Lord in many wonderful ways, but somehow they had let it all slip away.

b) Hold Fast. They needed to stand firm on whatever Biblical ground they were on. If this slipped from under their feet then they would have nothing at all. If there is spiritual weakness then it is important to at least build upon whatever ground we already maintain.

c) Repent. They needed to repent for all their past failures to live up to the truth. This includes sin, doubt, half-heartedness, and false teaching. This repentance had to be immediate or it would be too late for them.

d) Watch. This means to take a good look at themselves and to watch what was happening around them. If they did not take account of these things, then the judgement of God would come suddenly, when least expected, upon them. Every generation of believers ought to be prepared for the Return of Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10).

1 Thessalonians 5:2 **For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.**

2 Peter 3:10 **But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.**

4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

Good Point:-

They had a few worthy believers among them. It was probably their influence that was holding back the coming judgement. These saints had not defiled themselves by compromising with paganism. It is only those who have not defiled their garments that will reach Heaven and walk in robes of righteousness. Out of all the members

of the church in Sardis, these alone were worthy of the name Christian.

5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

Rewards:-

a) The promise of being clothed in white robes would have been especially meaningful to them since the city manufactured woollen garments.

b) If the church would overcome then it would be blessed with the presence of God (even as the few worthy ones are promised). It was their choice either to stand for the Lord or to continue in sin.

c) Their names would never be blotted out of the Lamb's Book of Life. All who are not in the Book of Life end up in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:15).

Revelation 20:15 **And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.**

All who reject the Truth will have their names blotted out (Revelation 22:19).

Revelation 22:19 **And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.**

If these people were saved, they would lose their salvation if they refused to overcome – be separate from the world and live for the Lord. The Lord's threat here is meaningless if it is impossible to blot a name out of the Lamb's Book of Life! It should of course be

noted that no Christian's name will be blotted out unless they have irrevocably rejected and turned against Christ.

d) If they obeyed the Lord then their names would be declared in Heaven. Only those who have their names in the Book of Life will be announced in Heaven.

6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

This message to the church at Sardis is applicable to every church also. Each person must listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to them through this letter.

Note: The Sardis period lasts from 1000 to 1500 AD, and consists of the final years dark ages, when the entire world was basically dead spiritually.

7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

Philadelphia's chief deity was Dionysus, the god of wine, no wonder then that the city's main industry was wine. "Philadelphia" means "brotherly love". The city was named by King Attalus of Pergamum, the brother of its founder.

The Lord Jesus Christ describes Himself as:-

a) Holy. He is the only perfect and sinless one. This also speaks of His divinity and Lordship. Since only God is holy (Isaiah 6:3), Jesus must be God.

Isaiah 6:3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

He is described as the “Holy One” elsewhere in the New Testament (Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34; John 6:69).

Mark 1:24 Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

Luke 4:34 Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God.

John 6:69 And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

b) True. He is always faithful, but this title also describes the fact that He is THE TRUTH, totally unlike the numerous false gods that the pagans worshipped.

c) Keys of David. He has the supreme authority. He is the only Messiah for the people of Israel and the Gentile nations. He will one day rule from Jerusalem during the Millennial Kingdom – from the city of David (Isaiah 22:22; Matthew 1:1).

Isaiah 22:22 And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.

Matthew 1:1 The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

d) He is the final authority, for He opens and closes the door of eternal life – something that is not within the power of any man. He also opens and shuts the door of opportunity for the church (Acts 14:27; 1 Corinthians 16:9; 2 Corinthians 2:12; Colossians 4:3).

Acts 14:27 And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

1 Corinthians 16:9 For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.

2 Corinthians 2:12 Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord.

Colossians 4:3 Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds.

8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

Good Points:-

a) The fact that there are no bad points mentioned deserves our notice.

b) They laboured for the Lord. They took every opportunity open to them to spread the Gospel of Christ. As a Missionary church, they used every possible means to get the job done. When God blesses a work there is nothing any man or devil can do to stop it (Acts 16:6-10).

Acts 16:6-10 Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into

Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

c) They only had a little strength but they used it! They were not a mega-church, but they still saw the mighty power of God working in them. Human weakness is no hindrance for the powerful work of God to be done (2 Corinthians 12:9).

2 Corinthians 12:9 **And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.**

d) They kept the word. This not only means that they preached it, but also that they would not compromise the word of God.

e) They did not deny the Lord's name. Not only did they stand firm despite persecution, but they also continued to speak out the truth – that there was salvation in no other name.

9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

Rewards:-

a) Every false teacher would one day have to submit to the true church. They will have to acknowledge that God anointed them. The false teachers will have to bow to the purity of the Gospel taught by true Bible-believers. Unfortunately all false teachings create the notion that those who follow it are superior and exclusively the people of God. This is especially true of Jewish Roots proponents who think they are more spiritual than others. God will prove that those who simply have faith are the ones loved by Him.

10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

b) They will be kept from the time of wrath that will come upon the earth in the last days. This promise of divine protection is only available to faithful believers. The definite article in “the hour” indicates that the church would be saved from a specific time of testing rather than from common trials and tribulations. The “all the world” part has not yet been fully fulfilled, therefore the “kept” part too finds its complete fulfilment at the close of the Church Age. This is reference to the Rapture since no true Christian will be appointed to wrath (Romans 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; 5:9).

Romans 5:9 **Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.**

1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 **For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.**

1 Thessalonians 5:9 **For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.**

11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

c) If they remained faithful unto the coming of the Lord, then no one will be able to steal the crown of eternal life from them. We should be living in such a way that none of our rewards could be lost at the Judgement Seat of Christ. This calls for watchfulness. “Quickly” doesn’t necessarily mean “speedily”, instead the word means “soon”. The imminency Of Christ’s return requires us to be constantly prepared, ready to meet Him by living righteously and in purity (Titus 2:13-14).

Titus 2:13-14 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

d) Faithful believers would be the very pillars of faith in the spiritual temple – the Heavenly Temple (Revelation 21:22).

Revelation 21:22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

e) They will be eternally kept and protected.

f) They will receive their new name, the heavenly name, which is linked to the name of God, the city of God, and the name of Jesus Himself. This must be a very special name indeed. It is our citizenship name for the Kingdom of Heaven.

13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

As with all the churches, this message applies to every believer in the churches. The Holy Spirit's voice must be heard in these final days of world history. We must be Philadelphian Christians and build a church worthy of the name of Christ by standing upon His true word.

Note: The Philadelphia period matches history from 1500 to 1900 AD, and is the age of the great evangelical revivals.

14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.

Laodicea was an extremely wealthy city that operated in banking, wool and medicine.

The Lord Jesus Christ describes Himself as the TRUTH (Amen) to the Laodicean Church. Interestingly enough Isaiah 65:16 states that God is “[the God of truth](#),” which literally means “the God of Amen” in Hebrew. Only the Truth can correct a wayward church. As a result Jesus is the Faithful and True Witness – what He says is absolute truth, not a mixture of truth and error. He points back to His resurrection as proof for what He says is true, for the “beginning of the creation of God” refers to the Resurrection of Christ, but it also indicates that Jesus is the Creator of all things. The word “beginning” has the meaning of “the source” or “the originator” in the Greek text. “Arche” gives us our English word “architect” (see John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2).

[John 1:1-3 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.](#)

[Colossians 1:16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.](#)

[Hebrews 1:2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.](#)

The other possibility is that it refers to someone who has rulership such as in the word “archbishop” or “archangel”. Maybe all of these

aspects of the word combine to give us a fuller understanding to what Christ truly is to His Church.

15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

Laodicea was fed by two springs of water, the hot spring from nearby Hierapolis and the cold, pure water of Colossae. The hot water was used for bathing and laundry, while the cold was for drinking refreshing water. Lukewarm water was considered to carry bacteria, so was avoided.

The traditional interpretation of this verse has been that the Laodiceans were being reprimanded for their neutrality or lack of zeal, that is, “lukewarm”, or sitting on the fence. The major problem with this is that Christ desired that they be either “cold or hot”, implying that both are acceptable to Him. This interpretation sees “cold” as a negative, the idea apparently being that Jesus either wants the readers to be either zealous or hot for Him or completely uncommitted, or in other words, cold. We can see that the usual interpretation is incorrect, for being “cold” here is a positive, and is as commendable as being “hot”. Simply put, the Lord wanted the church useful and fit for the purpose He has called it to.

Bad Points:-

a) Works. They did work for the Lord to some degree, but it was half-hearted. They were not particularly interested in spiritual matters, and this affected how they lived their Christian lives. They had become religious.

b) They were the “do-gooders” of their day. Today we would call them modernists and liberals.

c) They had enough Christianity to make it appear like they stood for God, but not enough to excite them to faithfully serve Him.

16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

d) God was sick and tired of their liberalism. To win friends and influence people they watered down the Gospel, but in doing so they were making God their enemy. Those who adopt humanistic tolerance will find that the Lord finds them offensive. Vomiting is never pleasant!

17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

e) They were prosperous and thought that their wealth meant that God was blessing them. Their three main industries are highlighted here: gold, clothing and medicine (eye salve). This wealth and health culture led to moral complacency and spiritual poverty.

f) They were positive thinkers; they did not need God's help – they could do it all by themselves. Their religion made a god of self.

g) They were spiritually blind. They could not see the spiritual condition that they were truly in, since money blinded them from seeing their true standing before God.

h) They were spiritually destitute.

i) They were in a very miserable state before God, yet they claimed that they worshipped God, had His joy, especially since they had so many earthly blessings they thought came from Him.

j) Poor. They had physical wealth but did not have the riches of Christ – the true treasure from Heaven.

k) They were blind. They could not see that Satan had trapped them. There are none so blind as those who will not see.

l) They were naked. They claimed to have the righteousness of Christ but did not. They were as foolish as the king in “The Emperor’s New Clothes”.

18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

Remedy:-

a) Listen. They must hear the counsel of God. This was their wake-up call before it was too late. Repentance and Revival must begin with listening to God’s word and putting it into action.

b) Pure Gold. True wealth come from God not in the earth’s materialism.

c) White raiment. This is the righteousness of Christ. He alone can cleanse a soul from sin and purify a Christian’s heart.

d) See. The Lord wants to open the spiritually blinded eyes just as He did the physically blind. If we come to Him, He will cause us to see what we are really like. We may not like what we see!

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

Rewards:-

a) Jesus loves even this Church. Because He loves them He must rebuke and chasten (Proverbs 3:11-12; Hebrews 12:4-11).

Proverbs 3:11-12 **My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord ; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.**

Hebrews 12:4-11 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

If they repent and become zealous for Him, then they would indeed be truly blessed. He is calling for real repentance here. not the half-hearted variety. Jesus' love is unconditional on His part, but we must be in the right spiritual condition and position to receive it. Both repentance and zealousness are not optional but a requirement.

20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

b) The Lord offers each person the chance to renew fellowship with Him. We should be doing the knocking but instead we find Christ knocking on the door of our hearts (and individual churches). This text is not a Gospel verse that is meant to appeal to the unsaved to become Christians, instead the problem is with the church itself. Some have become so hardhearted that they no longer hear God's voice. Neither do they care that they have no fellowship with Him. The door is firmly bolted from the inside. Those who do respond to

His invitation will enter in to renewed fellowship with the Lord. We must allow Him into every area and situation of our lives.

21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

c) Those who do respond by overcoming the lukewarmness, will be blessed with the privilege of reigning with Christ. This means that He will exalt them in the Kingdom.

22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Again, this message is for all the churches who have similar situations. It is for all church (and Christians) of every generation until the Lord returns.

Note: The Laodicean period lasts from 1900 to today, and marks the most compromised time in church history. The church today professes the fundamentals of truth, but hardly ever lives up to them.